



Guide for EMS: Quick Recognition of Toxic Agents in the Environment

BLISTER AGENTS

General: It would be unlikely that only one person (victim) would be involved, more likely there would be multiple victims and there would likely be a difference in number of victims per area depending on distance from the probable source of the toxin. The further one is from the source, the fewer casualties one would expect. Pets, stray or wild animals might also be affected so it would be important to take note of these as well as human victims. There may be odors apparent. With the exception of mustard blistering agents and radiation agents, the effects would be seen immediately.

It is imperative that the rescuer be protected from exposure! In all potential “toxin” exposures the law of distance applies, get the victim as far away from the source of exposure in the fastest time as possible! Generally the dose of the toxin falls off rapidly with distance. The treatment will be supportive and attention to the ABCs is important. Over treatment may produce problems as well as under treatment!

Symptoms: Often no immediate effects, what immediate effects may occur usually **do not get better when the victim is removed from the site of exposure and may actually worsen.**

Sudden **irritation and pain in eyes**, on exposed skin, and airway (particularly in the nose and throat), there may also be burns of the skin or epistaxis (nosebleeds). After a delay the skin in the moist areas (e.g. armpits, around the genitals, etc.) of the body may become affected, skin may appear to have a sunburn or may look actually burned. There may be an odor of garlic. **Caution:** The effects of mustard agents may not be apparent for hours after exposure.

Treatment: It is unlikely that a symptomatic casualty will be encountered; therefore it is unlikely that any antidotal therapy will be needed. Treatment will consist of removal from the exposure site, decontamination as indicated and respiratory support as needed. Soothing lotions may be applied to irritated skin once decontamination has been completed.

For further help call:

